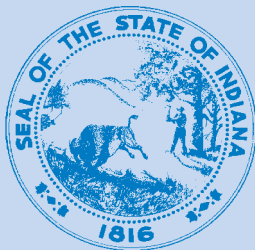


State Representative

Peggy Welch

The 2000 Session of the Indiana Legislature



How To Reach
Representative

Peggy Welch

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Spring, 2000

Dear Friend,

The 2000 session of the Indiana General Assembly ended on March 3. Even though this session was a short session, we tackled many important issues and passed legislation that will positively impact the lives of many Hoosiers. Bills were approved affecting issues such as prepaid funeral plans, oversight of the Indiana High School Athletic Association, sewers, posting of the Ten Commandments, regulation of laser pointers, school security, and organ donations—to name a few. I have detailed in this newsletter a few of these new laws, including legislation allocating the use of tobacco settlement funds, worker's compensation, unemployment benefits, and Medicaid disability.

I will be serving on several summer study committees. These committees allow legislators and the public to explore issues in greater depth than is permitted during the session. If you have an idea or concern that could be addressed by a summer study committee and/or legislation in 2001, please let me hear from you.

I hope to see you at the many community fairs, parades, and dinners in the coming months or you may call me at my home office, 812/323-7978. I want to hear your ideas or answer questions you may have about legislation.

I hope you have a great spring and summer!

Sincerely,



E-mail Updates Available On State Legislative Issues

Several people have indicated to me that they would like to receive e-mail updates on legislative issues and other issues important to our district. I am pleased to offer this service through my legislative office.

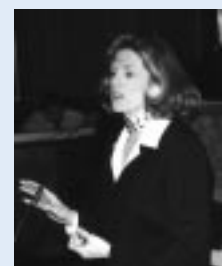
Simply e-mail or call my office and I will add you to this list. I am excited about the technological advances over the past few years that allow you nearly instant access to legislative news and information.

Inside This Newsletter

Legislative Review

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Census 2000





Session News

School Safety

Several bills passed this session deal with school safety. School buses will be required to display the school or school district and its corresponding number on the back and top of the vehicles. This new requirement will make it easier to identify school buses and students in an emergency.

School security plans may now remain confidential.

We also enacted legislation that stiffens the penalties for speeding violations near school to a Class B infraction. The maximum penalty for this offense is \$1,000.

IHSAA Appeals

A panel will be created to review appeals of rulings made by the Indiana High School Athletic Association.

Parents, high school principals and athletic directors will serve on the panel to rule on issues such as the eligibility of student athletes. In the past, appeals of IHSAA decisions often led to lengthy, expensive court fights. Now, the panel will address appeals and save students and parents time and money.

Legislative Accomplishments



Rep. Welch discusses legislation with a colleague.

Health Care

Medicaid -- Currently, Indiana requires that a person suffer from a life-long disability in order to receive Medicaid Disability assistance. New legislation replaces the life-long requirement with a four-year disability requirement.

Indiana has the most restrictive Medicaid Disability definition in the nation. Forty-eight other states require that a person suffer from a disability for one year. New Hampshire is the only other state which requires a four- year disability.

Organ Donations -- Employees at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles will be required to ask whether driver's license applicants wish to make an anatomical gift. Those who choose to do so will have an identifying symbol placed on their licenses.

Legislature Allocates Tobacco Funds

One of the biggest achievements of the 2000 legislative session was passage of legislation that sets up a system to distribute the more than \$4 billion Indiana will be receiving from the national tobacco settlement over the next 25 years. The money will be allocated toward health care and efforts

to reduce the use of tobacco products.

In the first year alone, \$35 million will be dedicated toward health care programs, with an emphasis on tobacco education and prevention. As a cancer nurse, I strongly supported this provision. Another \$20 million will be used to help seniors on low incomes purchase needed prescription drugs. Community health centers will receive \$15 million in program support.

Census 2000

The results of Census 2000 will impact millions of dollars in federal funding for the State of Indiana. Indiana's population is estimated to be around 6 million -- up from 5.5 million in 1990 (the last official U.S. Bureau of Census count).

Census Facts & Figures

- Census officials estimate that they missed more than 8.8 million people in 1990, mostly children, minorities and the poor.
- Four in 10 households did not return the census forms sent by the government in 1990.

You should have already received your form in the mail. The results will be used to determine federal funding for roads, schools, hospitals, services for the elderly and many other local needs.

To make sure everyone is included, census workers will distribute forms to people who live in group settings, such as universities and colleges, nursing homes, transitional shelters, correctional institutions, and halfway houses.

Census information **cannot** be shared with others, including Immigration and Naturalization Services, welfare services, Internal Revenue Service, police, courts and the military.

Be counted --- complete and return your form today!

Legislative Accomplishments

Helping Working Men, Women & Employers

Around 90 percent of Indiana workers who receive a disabling injury in a workplace accident will see their compensation increase close to 50 percent. There are improvements in the one-time cash payments made to a person who suffers a permanent partial impairment in a workplace accident.

It has been reported that Indiana ranks 48th in the nation in the amount of benefits provided to workers who are injured in the workplace or who have lost their jobs.

Indiana workers who lose their jobs will see unemployment compensation increase by 33 percent over the next three years. To finance the increase, the state will use a larger share of the unemployment trust fund, a move that will cut premium payments by employers by nearly \$80 million the next two years.

Ten Commandments

A new law will give state and local governments the right to display the Ten Commandments on public property. Many legislators feel that this legislation reflects the sentiments of a majority of the people of Indiana that our country was founded on the principles contained in the Ten Commandments.

The final decision on putting up a historic display containing the Commandments would be left up to local officials, who also would decide what version of the Commandments to display.

Visiting Community Groups

Visiting with constituents is one of the greatest joys of being a legislator. It is a pleasure meeting each of you and listening to your comments, suggestions and concerns. This is why I conducted 10 community meetings throughout the district during the fall.

During the legislative session, much of my time is spent in Indianapolis, but I believe it is important that I remain accessible to those whom I represent. I attended each of the legislative forums to which I was invited (except one that conflicted with another community forum). These included Bloomington Chamber of Commerce/WTIU, Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce, Monroe County League of Women Voters/Community Access Television Service, and Bedford Chamber of Commerce.

The questions and concerns raised at these meetings were helpful to me as I considered specific legislation. While much of the discussion centered on what was occurring in the legislature, I also visited with citizens about other issues and concerns. Thank you to those persons who were able to attend these meetings.



Rep. Welch serves on the Ways & Means Committee.



Session News

Environmental Safety

New legislation allows the Indiana Department of Environmental Management to suspend the use of any water coming from a combined sewer system, if wet weather discharges are detected in the system. This temporary suspension would be for the shortest period of time needed to protect human health.

The legislation gives IDEM the power to react quickly and efficiently to any problem that may arise from system discharges.

Laser Pointers

It is now illegal to direct a laser pointer at a law enforcement official. These laser pointers are often used as toys, but law enforcement officials can easily misidentify laser pointers as weapons. The penalty for directing a laser pointer at a police officer is a Class B misdemeanor.

Insurance Accountability

When insurance policies provide funding for funerals, new legislation requires that any money remaining after paying for funeral services should be paid directly to the beneficiary of the policy.



Rep. Welch at a community meeting.



Rep. Peggy Welch

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Call the Statehouse toll-free
1-800-382-9842

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State Legislative Web Site

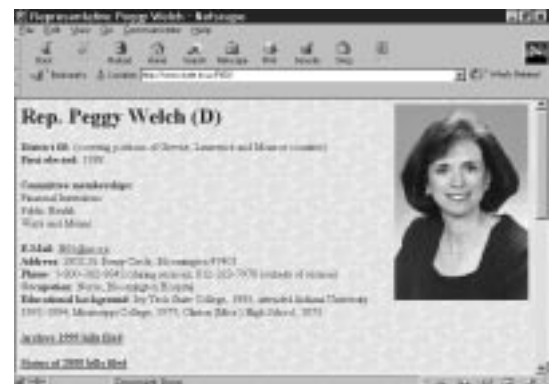
The state web site provides a great deal of information about state government, the legislative process and other related items. The main site at www.state.in.us offers a nice starting point to explore government in Indiana.

From that starting point, you can visit the home pages of elected state officials and state agencies. In addition, several premium services are available for a monthly fee.

I encourage you to visit my web site at www.state.in.us/R60 and explore various items related to the legislature.

A new feature on my web site will allow you to request various House publications. We currently offer publications specifically designed for senior citizens, grade-school children, and high school students in the process of choosing a college. Other publications give a general overview of various Indiana state agencies, offer a guide to women's health and advise how to avoid being the victim of a scam. There is also a booklet available which details every bill that became law during this year's legislative session.

You may also request booklets by calling my legislative office at 1-800-382-9842.



A screen shot of my legislative home page

Top Five State Web Sites*

1. State Job Bank
2. Hoosier Lottery Homepage
3. Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Search
4. General Assembly homepage
5. Dept. of Environmental Management homepage

*Based on number of visitors as of February 25, 2000